

Professional Bios



American
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on Aging

COHORT 4  THE ACCELERATORS

Morgann Adams



Morgann Adams, MS is the assistant outreach manager at the University of Pennsylvania - Penn Memory Center, (PMC), where she leads the community outreach efforts. Her primary focus is providing communities with brain health education related to Alzheimer's disease and dementia and increasing the recruitment of Black/African American older adults into clinical research. This is achieved through developing and implementing new recruitment strategies and collaboration with trusted community organizations. Additionally, she manages the PMC Research Participant Advisory Board and serves as a co-leader for the PMC Committee on Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity.

Ms. Adams graduated from Spelman College with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry. She then completed her Master of Science degree in Interdisciplinary Health Science at Drexel University.

Ms. Adams is passionate about bettering health outcomes, especially for underrepresented populations, and advocating for equitable health care access. Prior to working with the Penn Memory Center, she worked on the outreach team as an analyst for a mobile pediatric unit in Atlanta, GA. With her current role, Adams enjoys working with the Philadelphia community to increase minority representation and participation in Alzheimer's disease and dementia related research studies.

She is a fourth cohort Fellow of American Society on Aging's ASA RISE.
Priority Area of Interest: Health and Well-Being

Josephina Baca



Josephina Baca, is a Policy Analyst with the California Health and Human Services Agency. She is passionate about enhancing public health and well-being and is dedicated to advocating for and advancing public and social policies that support aging and underrepresented communities. With a solid academic background, including a Bachelor of Science in Gerontology from California State University, Sacramento, and a Master of Public Administration from Hawaii Pacific University, Ms. Baca brings a unique blend of knowledge and practical expertise to their role.

Ms. Baca serves as a lead in Aging and Disabled populations for the Behavioral Health team and holds keen understanding of the complexities surrounding mental health and caregiving. Ms. Baca plays a pivotal role in statewide policies and initiatives that positively impact vulnerable communities. Her academic research focuses on the intersection of informal caregiving and long-term supportive services for middle-income individuals, a topic central to her master's thesis at Hawaii Pacific University which explores innovative approaches to supporting caregivers and enhancing access to essential services for aging and disabled populations.

In addition to their policy expertise, Ms. Baca is a certified End of Life Specialist, demonstrating a commitment to providing compassionate care and support to individuals and families during challenging times. She has also completed the Powerful Tools for Caregiving Program, further enhancing their skills in supporting caregivers and promoting resilience in the face of caregiving challenges. Outside of her professional endeavors, Ms. Baca is a caregiver for her 96-year-old grandmother and coaches' soccer for Sacramento State Universities Women's Soccer club.

She is a fourth cohort Fellow of American Society on Aging's ASA RISE.
Priority Area of Interest: Social Impact and Innovation

Uwakieme Eligwe



Uwakieme Eligwe, is a Program Manager for Students for Health Equity at Vanderbilt University School of Nursing in Nashville, Tn. In this role she builds and maintains relationships with strategic community-based partners to identify and strengthen opportunities for health equity. She is an Aging in Place Specialist with a deep passion for the field of aging having a strong background in gerontology and community advocacy.

Dedicated to advocating for vulnerable populations, including older adults, youth, and persons with disabilities, Ms. Eligwe has led health equity initiatives and has championed affordable housing, and aging-in-place solutions. With expertise in managing programs and fostering community partnerships, her work addresses critical needs that enhance quality of life and promote health equity. She has seen that true inclusion requires a deep, rational awareness of the varying needs of individuals. It is about creating spaces where everyone feels valued and heard, recognizing that we do not all start from the same place.

She holds a Bachelor's in Public Health from Georgia Southern University and a Master's in Healthcare Administration from Trevecca Nazarene University. She continues to create inclusive, impactful ecosystems that support equitable development and sustainable communities.

She is a fourth cohort Fellow of American Society on Aging's ASA RISE.
Priority Area of Interest: Economic Security

Eryn Kimura



Eryn Kimura (she, they) is the Associate Director of Community Resiliency Programs at Booker T. Washington Community Service Center - a historic, Black-led and Black-serving organization that has been serving San Francisco's Fillmore/Western Addition neighborhood for over 105 years. She oversees and directs the programmatic development, operations and strategic priorities of 3 ever-expanding programs including the Food Justice and Sovereignty Program, BSAFE (Black Safety Access Freedom Equity) Program, and the Senior Wellness Program. She works in collaborative partnership with intergenerational program participants, community stakeholders, local and state agencies, and fellow values-aligned community-based organizations leading the direction and development of culturally responsive, trauma-informed direct services and programs for BIPOC older adults and adults with disabilities that center agency, empowerment, and dignity.

Outside of work, she is also a visual artist, cultural producer, and community organizer with a deep-seated commitment to actualizing a more just, equitable existence where all can thrive (and age) in the intergenerational 'village' with utmost abundance, deliciousness and joy.

A fifth generation San Francisco, Eryn grew up witnessing the pervasive and deleterious effects of historic, structural inequities that grossly affected Black San Franciscans. This politicized her at a very young age, propelling not only her undergraduate pursuit of Ethnic Studies and her work at the intersection of education, community organizing, and equity, but also her unwavering commitment to justice. From the University of California, Santa Barbara she earned Bachelor of Arts degrees in both Asian-American Studies and Psychology.

She is a fourth cohort Fellow of American Society on Aging's ASA RISE.
Priority Area of Interest: Ageism and Culture

Jennifer Lee Rambharose



Jennifer Lee-Rambharose is a Research Associate II with Lurie Institute for Disability Policy, Brandeis University. She is a subject matter expert examining the linkages between ableism, systemic racism, and access to community-based services. As a Black, disabled woman she has exercised the power of self-advocacy all of her life.

Professionally, she has devoted her career to preserving the right for persons with disabilities to live independently and receive services and support that meet their needs. She has a background in systems advocacy, program management, and Independent Living Services. For over a decade she provided systems advocacy and led a team of peer advocates with disabilities.

As a qualitative researcher and Project Coordinator of the Community Living Equity Center, she explores community living outcomes for persons of color and the intersection of race and disability within Home and Community-based Services. She uplifts peer research models that support community-lead research while uplifting disability justice. Jennifer, strives to transform the way research builds the capacity of disabled people of color and community-based organizations supporting people with disabilities. The quotation, “Nothing about us without us,” has shaped her work as a manager, advocate, and researcher.

Ms. Lee-Rambharose holds a Bachelor of Arts degrees in Health, Society and Policy and American Studies from Brandeis University and a Masters in Disability Studies from the City University of New York.

She is a fourth cohort Fellow of American Society on Aging’s ASA RISE.
Priority Area of Interest: Equity and Justice

Cinthie Lopez Paz



Cinthie Lopez Paz, a Human Services Administrator I for Los Angeles County, co-leads the County's Elderly Nutrition Program. She formerly led the implementation of the L.A. Found, a countywide initiative aimed at helping families and caregivers of individuals with cognitive impairments and intellectual/developmental disabilities who are prone to wandering in Los Angeles County, California.

She started her career in the public sector in 1998 and found her calling in public service. She draws on a vast array of experience, including policy work, communications and outreach team leadership. Additionally, she has been a subject matter expert for automation projects.

Born in Santurce, Puerto Rico, she relocated to California with her family in 1989. Ms. Lopez Paz earned a Master's degree in public administration from California State University Northridge and a Bachelor of Arts in Humanities with a concentration in public administration from California State University Dominguez Hills.

She is a fourth cohort Fellow of American Society on Aging's ASA RISE.
Priority Area of Interest: Social Impact and Innovation

Aleiah Mann



Aleiah Mann, is a Senior Program Associate with USAging. She is an aging professional whose work history includes work in the non-profit sector, long term care/assisted living, research, and clinical settings. As it relates to issues facing older adults, she is a result driven, passionate critical thinker and problem solver.

Ms. Mann has a unique educational background with a Bachelor of Psychology with a neuroscience emphasis from the University of Georgia and a Master of Science in Dementia and Aging Studies from Texas State University. She wrote her master's thesis on the influence of personality on cognition in older African American adults. Her master's degree positioned her to think critically about issues facing older adults. As a result of her graduate level coursework, she is proficient in both statistics and data analysis.

During her educational and professional career, she has had a specific interest and passion in health equity, addressing access and unmet needs in marginalized groups, and advocating for diversity in clinical trials, especially as it relates to dementia. She believes it is important to be empathetic and keep the needs of the individual served at the core of her professional actions. She hopes to continue to learn and grow in this space, as it is compulsory in creating a more equitable and healthy society.

She is a fourth cohort Fellow of American Society on Aging's ASA RISE.
Priority Area of Interest: Health and Well-being

Maria Najlis



Maria Najlis, is a Program Manager on AARP Foundations' Health Essentials team which has its headquarters in Washington DC. In this role, her efforts include outreach efforts and increasing the Foundation's understanding of how best to inform older adults with low incomes about public benefit programs that they could be eligible for.

She is a results-focused management professional with considerable experience in planning and implementing programs in the non-profit aging services sector. She has proven success in managing outreach for public benefits. She is a strong advocate for individuals with diverse backgrounds and ensures quality services and opportunities for all. Ms. Najlis is skilled in cultivating new relationships with internal and external constituents to elevate the mission and vision of organizations. She has over a decade of experience in serving older adults with much of that time focused on increasing use of SNAP and other public benefits.

Ms. Najlis believes the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion are critical to fostering a thriving society. Unlike the "colorblind" mantra of old, diversity acknowledges and values the differences among one another to view people as whole individuals and not as individuals in spite of their intersectional identities. She has a commitment to social justice and addressing structural inequities.

She holds a Master of Arts in gerontology and a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), Political Science from Georgia State University, Atlanta, GA. Ms. Najlis is a first generation Nicaraguan immigrant to the US.

She is a fourth cohort Fellow in American Society on Aging's ASA RISE.
Priority Area of Interest: Ageism and Culture

Christian Pleskov



Christian Pleskov, JD is a Staff Attorney at Senior LAW Center in Philadelphia, PA. She has provided over a decade of experience delivering legal and social services to marginalized populations. In her current role, she focuses on providing legal support to dually eligible older adults across Pennsylvania, particularly those whose health suffers due to housing issues. Senior LAW Center offers comprehensive services to safeguard the legal rights of older Pennsylvanians, emphasizing trauma-informed lawyering, education, and advocacy at local, state, and national levels.

Ms. Pleskov finds deep fulfillment in offering client-centered, holistic legal services to older adults disproportionately affected by injustice. Her approach affirms their dignity, autonomy, and inherent worth. She reveres the wisdom of community elders, ensuring they have access to the justice they rightly deserve. Each of her interactions with older clients serves as a beautiful reminder of her grandmother's perseverance and the sacrifices made by previous generations, which paved the way for present opportunities.

Through her work at Senior LAW Center, Ms. Pleskov embodies a commitment to honoring the resilience and contributions of older adults, striving to enhance their quality of life through compassionate legal advocacy. She believes that we need to address the root causes of inequality, exclusion and injustice that pervade the world and not just treat the symptoms.

Ms. Pleskov graduated from The College of New Jersey, Bachelor of Arts, cum laude, Political Science/Minor in Law and Justice Studies. She received her JD from Temple University Beasley School of Law.

She is a fourth cohort Fellow of American Society on Aging's ASA RISE.
Priority Area of Interest: Health & Well-Being

Carolina Quiñonez



Carolina Quiñonez is a dedicated and passionate Bilingual Case Manager at Larimer County Office on Aging (Larimer Area Agency on Aging) in Loveland, Colorado. She provides vital support to older adults and individuals living with disabilities, offering options counseling, application assistance, and resource connections in both Spanish and English.

Prior to her current role, Ms. Quiñonez served as an assistant pastor for 15 years at a Non-Profit organization focused on assisting Spanish-speaking families and advocating for underserved communities within Larimer County. She is also a Certified Assembly of God Minister through Global University and holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Florida Atlantic University.

She is a member of the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging Committee at Larimer County Human Services and a representative for the Larimer County AAA at the Fort Collins Interfaith Council. She is a recipient of the 2022 Larimer County Brendan Unitt Award and was also recently nominated to the 2024 Human Relations Awards of the city of Fort Collins for her work towards advancing equity and social justice in our community.

Ms. Quiñonez believes deeply in the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion, seeing it as a call to action to amplify marginalized voices, dismantle oppressive systems, and foster a just and equitable society where everyone can thrive, regardless of their background, race, ethnicity, or immigration status.

She is a fourth cohort Fellow of American Society on Aging's ASA RISE.
Priority Area of Interest: Equity and Justice

Fayana Richards



Fayana Richards, PhD, MPH is a Senior Health Equity Consultant in the Center for Health Equity Practice at Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI). She is a medical anthropologist and public health professional with expertise in gerontology, caregiving, race/ism, biomedicine, and health inequities. She facilitates health equity and social justice public health programming workshops and performs public health workforce capacity building consulting with public health organizations, local public health departments and healthcare systems.

She has spent her career committed to care: who gets it, who does not have it, why don't they have it, who cares, and what good care means individually and collectively using a health equity lens. Fayana considers care to be a generative platform to think through and address various forms of inequalities in the world covering ethical, moral, political and social challenges that she believes will require intergenerational attention and efforts to ensure equitable care, in its various forms, for current and future generations.

She earned an MPH and PhD in Medical Anthropology from Michigan State University. Prior to MPHI, she served as a Post-Doctoral Research Associate in the Center for Community Health Equity Research, School of Public Health and Health Sciences at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Memphis. She is a proud alum of the Ronald E. McNair Scholars Program.

She is a fourth cohort Fellow of American Society on Aging's ASA RISE.
Priority Area of Interest: Health and Well-Being

Archie Roundtree



Archie Roundtree Jr., JD, is a Senior Attorney with Justice in Aging. His focus is to pursue systemic change in law and policy to improve the lives of low-income older adults and beyond. He engages in community enrichment, civil legal services, outreach, diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. He builds and maintains relationships and engages in collaborative efforts with partners and coalitions, including national and local legal groups, aging and disability network members, state-based advocates, and others involved in protecting the legal rights of older adults and advancing racial justice.

Mr. Roundtree was drawn to support disenfranchised communities because volunteerism is ingrained in his family. He watched his father, and many family members serve in the armed forces. His family has a strong commitment and dedication to true service.

Moreover, he would tutor other youths, clean up local community areas, and sing in the choir. He also partnered with a nonprofit agency that works in high schools to build trust for positive and healthy youth development.

Mr. Roundtree began his career providing legal services to senior homeowners who were victims of fraud and elder abuse, to preserve their homeownership and home equity. He also made local, regional and national presentations on elder abuse and fraud impacting homeowners. He is a graduate of Seattle University School of Law and California State University, Northridge.

Mr. Roundtree serves on the Seattle University School of Law, Alumni Board, and mentors' students, advising them on educational and professional options. He is a 2023 Outstanding Recent Alumnus of Seattle University and, selected by Swizz Beatz for the 2024 Impact Mentorship program.

He is a fourth cohort Fellow of American Society on Aging's ASA RISE.
Priority Area of Interest: Ageism and Culture

Lissette Ramos Sarfraz



Lissette Ramos Sarfraz, LSW, serves as Community Relations Manager for Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA). She has 20 years of experience working in the field of aging. In her current position, she supervises an outreach team with a primary focus on educational programming, promoting resources, event planning, and advocating on behalf of elders. Her previous positions at PCA were as Long-term Care Manager and Latino Outreach Coordinator. Ms. Sarfraz's experience in the field of aging stems from both direct service and community outreach. She has firsthand experience working with groups in diverse communities and providing support along with advocacy.

Ms. Sarfraz is passionate about the importance of representation and access to resources in all communities. She believes that without diversity, equity and inclusion, (DEI), underserved communities will not have representation and equal access to resources.

She is an active participant in several advisory committees and recently became a Community Advisory Board Member for the University of Pennsylvania's School of Nursing Tiempo Juntos research study. The research study focuses on how exercise and nutrition impact Latino older adults with mild memory loss.

She is a first generation college graduate. Her education includes a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and Business from Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA and a Master's in Social Service with a clinical concentration from Bryn Mawr College Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research.

She is a fourth cohort Fellow of American Society on Aging's ASA RISE Priority Area of Interest: Health and Well-being

De Andra Sharp



De Andra Sharp is an Impact Manager with Next50, a private national foundation which works toward creating a world that values aging. In her role as Impact Manager, she plays a crucial role in supporting the impact team by managing grantees and grants to ensure that the organization's efforts effectively serve communities and organizations dedicated to older adults. She is dedicated to advocating for equitable access to resources and services for older adults.

She has acquired extensive understanding of the structural inequities and systemic barriers impacting older adults, particularly marginalized communities such as BIPOC and LGBTQ+ elders. Previous positions include serving as an Intake Caseworker for Arapahoe County, a Caseworker for InnovAge, co-facilitating the Social Justice in South Africa course at the University of Denver's Graduate School of Social Work and working as part of the Family Services Staff for the Aurora Housing Authority.

A proud Coloradoan, Ms. Sharp is a double graduate of the University of Denver, where she earned Bachelor's in Law and Society and her Master's in Social Work. Currently she serves as a Commissioner with the City of Aurora Human Relations Commission.

She is a fourth cohort Fellow of American Society on Aging's ASA RISE.
Priority Area of Interest: Ageism and Culture

Nandini Singh



Nandini Singh, MPH, is passionate about connecting academia and communities to create and sustain evidence-based programming. She serves as the first Coalition Director of the Northern California Coalition for Social Connection at University of California San Francisco, (UCSF). This coalition focuses on addressing social isolation and loneliness among older adults through research, advocacy, resource sharing, and community building. Additionally, Ms. Singh contributes to study coordination, data collection, analysis, and writing at UCSF's Social Connections and Aging Lab.

As a public health professional, Ms. Singh hopes to advance on-the-ground efforts that drive social change. Her education and diverse work experience have equipped her with expertise in program development, grant writing, health communications, community engagement, and facilitation. She is committed to advancing public health through collaboration and community connection.

Ms. Singh earned her Master of Public Health (MPH) with a concentration in Health Behavior at the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill, (UNC). During her time at UNC, she focused on developing and implementing community-based programs in food access and nutrition education. In April 2022, she received the 'Leonard Dawson Fund in Public Health Practice' Award, recognizing her commitment to community engagement within the Health Behavior Department.

Prior to her graduate studies, she obtained her Bachelor of Science degree from The College of William and Mary. For two years, she served as a Program and Development Manager at HomeWorks Trenton, an education-focused nonprofit in New Jersey. There, she led two years of programming and helped fundraise over \$1 million. While in this role, she won the Blueprint Fellowship Pitch Competition, hosted by the Impact Hub New York Metropolitan Area in 2021.

She is a fourth cohort Fellow of American Society on Aging's ASA RISE.
Priority Area of Interest: Health and Well-being

Nakia Speller



Nakia Speller is a Supportive Services Division Manager with the Prince William Area Agency on Aging in the state of Virginia. As an aging professional dedicated to advocating for equitable and inclusive aging experiences across the lifespan, she brings over two decades of experience in the field of gerontology. Her passion lies in addressing the unique challenges faced by older adults, particularly in navigating systemic barriers, promoting social justice, while creating programs that aid families in navigating the challenges of daily life.

Throughout her career, she has been committed to developing programs that enhance quality of life for older adults, advocating for policy changes to address age-related disparities, and creating space for older adults to advocate for themselves even when a power of attorney is in place. She believes in fostering environments where aging is embraced as a diverse and valuable stage of life, free from discrimination and inequality. Life reimaged can happen at any stage of life and she believes older adults are one of our greatest assets.

Ms. Speller has a Master's degree in gerontology, and is a Certified Public Manager. She strives to contribute to the advancement of inclusive practices and policies that support aging populations. Her goal is to continue making meaningful contributions to the field, promoting positive aging outcomes, and advocating for the rights and dignity of older adults.

She is a fourth cohort Fellow of American Society on Aging's ASA RISE.
Priority Area of Interest: Ageism and Culture

Ashley Staton



Ashley Staton, MSW, is a Dementia Education Specialist with Virginia Commonwealth University and serves as the social worker on the Virginia Memory Project, (VMP), where she provides interested VMP enrollees with a memory screening and/or resources to refer for formal services provided by the Richmond Brain Health Initiative and other Qualified Health Care professionals. Her work is dedicated to ensuring older adults within Virginia have access to equitable brain health, memory and caregiving resources.

Ms. Staton has actively pursued opportunities to work with older adults, whether in living facilities or in the medical field, making her own stand against social injustice and inequality. Currently, in her role with the VMP she has the opportunity to teach people about ageism and the many obstacles that older adults face. She also encourages other social workers to think about working with older adults and challenge the narrative that the profession of social work is dedicated to children. Additionally, she seeks friendships and relationships with people of all ages to ensure that she is inclusive in her personal life, as well as her professional one.

She holds Master of Social Work, a Certificate in Aging Studies and Bachelor degrees in Psychology and African American Studies from Virginia Commonwealth University. She is a first generation college graduate.

She is a fourth cohort Fellow of American Society on Aging's ASA RISE.
Priority Area of Interest: Equity and Justice

Joy Toliver



Joy Toliver, M.P.H, joined the National Institute on Aging's, (NIA) Office of Strategic Extramural Programs as a Program Analyst in January 2020. In this role, Ms. Toliver develops, implements, and evaluates programs and initiatives to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion in the NIA Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grant program. This program provides more than \$150M per year in funding to small businesses developing aging-related innovations. She is also program director for the NIA Start-Up Challenge, a five-month accelerator program and cash prize competition developed to foster diversity in aging research and life science entrepreneurship.

Ms. Toliver collaborates across the National Institute of Health, (NIH) to participate in funding opportunities and programs that promote health equity and that diversify the research and entrepreneurial workforce. She also leads NIA's entrepreneurial training and investor initiatives, building relationships with investors, strategic partners, and key stakeholders in aging research and development.

Prior to joining NIA, Ms. Toliver served in leadership roles in senior living operations and geriatric care management. She completed her Master of Public Health degree at the University of Maryland, College Park, where she was awarded Outstanding Capstone for her research on aging and homelessness in Baltimore city. Her research interests include minority health disparities, long-term care access and quality, and direct care worker training and retention strategies.

She is a fourth cohort Fellow of American Society on Aging's ASA RISE.
Priority Area of Interest: Health & Well-being